

WHOSE POLICY IS THIS?

Unfair Treatment of Lieut. E. L. Baker Opens a Vast Area of Inquiry into the Rights of Gallant Negro Soldiers—Presidential Attention Desired.

Second Lieutenant E. L. Baker Jr., a member of the Philippine Scouts has received through military channels from the Secretary of War, the gold medal recently awarded him for his gallant conduct under fire at Santiago, Cuba, July 1, 1898. Lieutenant Baker is the only man who received a gold medal for bravery in the Spanish war in Cuba in 1898. In the latter part of 1898, Lieutenant Baker was commissioned First Lieutenant 10th United States Volunteer Infantry. In 1899 he was commissioned by President McKinley as Captain 49th Infantry. He served about two years in the Philippines with the gallant 49th regiment, which was mustered out at San Francisco, June 30th 1901. With excellent endorsements from superior army officers, such as General Wheeler, Inspector General Wygant, Colonel Hod 10th U. S. Infantry, and regular majors and captains, Captain Baker came on to Washington and appealed for a commission in the regular army. He remained here about three months, until he was finally given to understand that there was no place for colored men in the regular army as commissioned officers. Leaving Washington in disgust, he was later given a commission as second lieutenant, native Philippine scouts, for a period of four years. It is a striking shame on the part of the American government the way worthy colored soldiers and ex-volunteer officers have been treated in the reorganization of our present regular army. When war was on in 1898, and men were needed to "stop bullets," Negro volunteer officers and soldiers could be seen in large quantities. When the Filipinos were fighting the American flag in the Philippines, Mr. McKinley sent two colored regiments to the Philippines to crush the insurrectionists, offered by colored captains and lieutenants. But when peace was declared with all the world, and the United States Congress authorized the reorganization of the United States Army to the maximum strength of one hundred men no Negroes were then needed, and every colored applicant was told by General Corbin that "it was not the policy of the administration to commission colored men for officers in the regular army."

Feeling this fate staring them in the face, these humiliated applicants applied for commissions in the Porto Rico native regiment as lieutenants to meet refusal there. Then as a last resort, some applied for commissions as lieutenants in the native Philippine scouts for four years, to then be told that the President of the United States could not appoint any more lieutenant of scouts except upon General Chaffee's recommendation. Many of the colored officers who served in the Philippines as volunteer officers and who made the applications mentioned are graduates from such colleges as Harvard and Wilberforce, and universities like Lincoln, Howard, Boston and Atlanta, to say nothing of the high schools and academies.

Another shame and outrage in this connection is how some of these worthy men were kept out of the regular service. We hear that after the 48th Infantry of colored troops arrived at San Francisco on its return from the Philippines to be mustered out, the Adjutant

General of the United States Army at Washington, D. C., sent a telegram to Col. Duval, to wit:

"Col. Duval, 48th Infantry, San Francisco, California."

"In your efficiency report on your regimental officers, you flatter Captain Denison of your regiment very highly. Great pressure is being brought to bear by the people of Chicago to have Captain Denison placed in the regular army. As it is not the policy of the administration to commission colored men as officers in the regular army, except as they might come through West Point, you will please change your report on Captain Denison so as to bear us out in this policy."

If true, shame on the Republic of the United States! Shame on its president, and shame on all who countenance such a conspiracy perpetrated upon a man who offered his life for the honor of the United States of America in war, and who gallantly fought the Filipinos for two years in tropical warfare to be subjected to such perfunctory treatment at the hands of the chief rulers of the United States government, because God saw fit to make him a colored man! Some of the white officers from every volunteer regiment that served in the Philippines were commissioned as lieutenants in the new army. Many of such officers were intellectually inferior to some of the colored volunteer officers who were so shamefully denied this right—and no body knows it better than General Corbin. Why should a country use colored men as officers during the time of war and then deny them the desire on their part in times of peace when there is provision? Oh, our white countrymen, will you tell us for what purpose are the bones of the Negro soldiers bleaching in Cuba and the Philippines? Is it true, our white countrymen, that Negro soldiers made it possible for Mr. Roosevelt to be living today? Will you tell us if it is true that General Corbin was tried by a court martial for cowardice in the face of the enemy in the battle of Knoxville while commanding Negro troops, and the Negro witnesses before that court saved General Corbin from shame and conviction? If so, what is the man who stabs his savior in the back? What shall become of the nation that caused the blood of the confederate soldiers to flow out in streams for the equal rights of all men, and now stoops to keep down the men for whom they fought to liberate? Where is the president of the United States, who said all laws should apply to all men alike and that "words not backed by deeds amount to nothing?"

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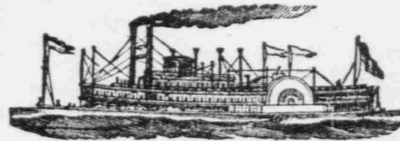
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